

Coins

For collectors, a 24-karat quiz

By Roger Boye

HERE'S A CHANCE to find out how much you know about the most famous coinage metal on the eve of the federal government's big sale of gold medallions.

As usual, quiz answers appear at the end of the column. (For details of the medal sale, see last Sunday's Tribune.)

1. If all the gold ever mined in the world were stacked in one place, it would (A) fill about half of Lake Michigan, (B) cover Chicago to a depth of 22 feet, (C) fill the insides of five buildings the size of Sears Tower, or (D) cover a football field to a depth of about 3 feet.

2. True or false: Gold is a durable metal that can be hammered into almost any shape or divided into any size or unit of weight.

3. Where was the first "gold strike" in the United States?

4. A coin made of 18-karat gold contains (A) 18 per cent gold, (B) equal parts of gold and silver, (C) 75 per cent gold, or (D) pure gold.

5. One of the most famous types of U.S. gold coins is dubbed "the stella" by collectors. What is it?

6. In 1915, the federal government made three

types of commemorative gold coins to honor the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. What was unique about one of those coin types?

ANSWERS:

1. D. About 97,000 tons have been mined throughout history. The U.S. steel industry can pour 100,000 tons of metal in five hours.

2. True. In fact, one ounce of gold can be stretched into a wire 50 miles long or hammered into a sheet thin enough to cover nearly 300 square feet. Also, gold does not rust, tarnish, or corrode.

3. Historians believe it was in Cabarrus County, N.C., in 1799. By the late 1830s, gold also had been discovered in Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. The famous gold strike at Sutter's Mill in California did not come until 1848.

4. C. Pure gold is 24 karat.

5. A \$4 gold piece minted for only two years (1879 and 1880) as a test coin. "Stella" is Latin for "star," the object depicted on the tails side of the coin.

6. It had a face value of \$50, the only such coin denomination ever produced by the U.S. government. The piece contained nearly 2½ ounces of gold. Today, uncirculated specimens sell for \$13,000 and up.